

# STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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## AN ASSESSMENT OF THE ISRAELI-ARAB PEACE PROCESS: COULD IT BE SO SIMPLE AS "LAND FOR PEACE?"

BY

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## ABSTRACT

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The achievement of a lasting peace in the Middle East between the state of Israel and her Arab neighbors has been oft sought but seldom found. In those instances where a brokered peace has endured, some form of "Land for Peace" settlement between the parties was made. An argument could be made that further progress towards a lasting peace between Israel and her other Arab neighbors could also be founded upon this seemingly simple arrangement. This assessment will explore the "Land for Peace" argument while analyzing the recent history, demographics, economics and water resources of the region. Further, Israel's lack of strategic depth in terms of land mass and relative proximity to her neighbors will be addressed from the perspective of current weapons technology. This assessment will also look at the probability of a peace settlement given the track records of Israel's political parties. Finally, the role of U.S. National Security Strategy towards stability and peace between Israel and the Middle East will be assessed. Conclusions will be drawn from the assessment.



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**An Assessment of the Israeli-Arab Peace Process:**  
**Could it be so Simple as "Land for Peace?"**

The achievement of a lasting peace in the Middle East between the state of Israel and her Arab neighbors has been oft sought but seldom found. In those few instances where a brokered peace has endured, some form of "Land for Peace" settlement between the parties was made. An argument could be made that further progress towards a lasting peace between Israel and her other Arab neighbors could likewise be founded upon similar arrangements; arrangements that in the historical context could conceivably amount to restoration of pre-1967 boundaries within the region. Following the recent victory of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud party over former Prime Minister Shimon Peres' Labor party, there was widespread concern that the significant progress made in the peace process during the waning months the Labor party reign would dramatically slow or even come to a screeching halt.

This assessment will analyze the Israeli-Arab peace process by exploring the "Land for Peace" argument; focusing upon Israel's recent history, diverse demographics, economic factors and water resources throughout the region. Further, the reality of Israel's lack of land mass to give her strategic depth will be addressed from the perspective of current weapons technology. Finally, the role of U.S. National Security Strategy towards regional stability and peace will be assessed. Conclusions will be drawn from the assesement.

## Background

The birth of the state of Israel can be traced back to the Zionist movement that began in Europe during the latter part of the nineteenth century. The Zionists, fueled by never-ending religious persecution, ridicule, torture and even murder of entire families, sought to establish a homeland where all Jewish people could settle and live in relative peace. The Zionists looked to their Biblical roots for such a homeland. The arid region located between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea, named Palestine by the British imperial authorities, was designated in the Balfour Declaration of 1917 as the Jewish national homeland. During the approximately twenty years prior to the 1917 Declaration, thousands of Jewish pioneers had already begun to settle the region, most of whom joined a Kibbutz, or agricultural cooperative settlement.

Life in a Kibbutz was demanding, strenuous, and unrelenting. There was little sympathy for weakness since male and female alike were expected to work equally in the labor of draining swampland and irrigating arid regions. The land would have to be rebuilt, acre by acre, by the believers; labor would be the measure of their devotion.<sup>1</sup> The following passage from a speech given in December 1920 at a workers conference in Tel Aviv, provides a quick glimpse of the fervor and dedication behind the struggle for statehood:

We, the children of middle class families, who never in all our days have known physical labor but who are coming to Palestine and becoming successfully adapted to all types of work, whether it be constructing roads and highways, plowing in the plains, stone clearing or planting in the hills—we are living proof that the marrow of our nation has not run dry....It is for us to proclaim to the Jewish people...of Poland and Rumania....that even before our hair has turned gray, they shall be citizens of Eretz Israel here with us.<sup>2</sup>



The young man's vow was to be fulfilled, but not before his hair turned gray. The young people who immigrated in the early twenties, following World War I and the Russian Revolution, shared the hopes of the speaker. Among the most notable of those Zionist immigrants was a young Russian-born American girl, Golda Mabovitch.

Golda Meir (Mabovitch) would go on to play a crucial and developmental role in the very birth of Israel. Her strong conviction of purpose, and unwavering, life-long dedication to the goal of a Jewish homeland were matched only by her personal work ethic. While living in the Kibbutz, she adapted to, and even thrived in the labor intensive environment, becoming a positive, motivating influence on those around her. Golda's leadership style and natural ability to influence others was well known throughout the newly formed Histadrut, the trade union of Jewish workers in Palestine. For this reason she was called upon to become the Secretary of the Women's Labor Council in 1928, thereby launching her public service career. As a public servant, Golda proved to be a leader who remained focused on the vision of creating a Jewish state through the workers.<sup>3</sup>

Rather than chronicle the year-by-year development of the nation of Israel, I will fast forward in time to the end of World War II. This leap in time leaves out the miserable years of hope, frustration, futility, deceit and the wholesale mass murder of millions of Jews. However, despite the terrible horror of these years, Golda Meir and the other developmental leaders of the Zionist movement never faltered or lost sight of the vision of a Jewish national homeland.

Jewish Palestine was bordered to the North, East and South by Arab nations whose people and leaders were openly hostile and resentful of the Zionist's efforts to establish a Jewish national homeland. The Western border was and remains along the Mediterranean Sea. This environment was compounded by inflexible British colonial administrators whose government refused to acknowledge Jewish nationalism and established blockades against immigration of Jewish refugees into Jewish Palestine. Several underground organizations led by the pioneers openly defied the British blockades. It was during such periods of struggle, and due in large part to a sense of "unconcern" throughout the world, that Israel was forced as a people and a nation to develop a somber sense of self-sufficiency.<sup>4</sup>

In 1946, the Jewish Agency launched a daring coup against the British administrators that effectively cut off all land links between Jewish Palestine and neighboring countries and isolated the British administrators. In retaliation, the British administrators placed Moshe Sharett, the head of the political department and most of the other male leaders of the Jewish Agency, in detention camps. The few Jewish Agency leaders who avoided capture subsequently chose Golda Meir to be the acting head of its political department during the detention period. As it turned out, Golda held this position for two years, until the actual establishment of Jewish Palestine into the state of Israel.<sup>5</sup> Particularly noteworthy during these two years was Golda Meir's determination to deal with the British authorities as if she and they were equals. She constantly walked a fine line between dignity and provocation, espousing the conviction that if you wanted other

nations to respect your efforts at nationalism, you had to deal with them as if you already were an established nation.<sup>6</sup>

In reaction to the British prohibition against immigration, Golda Meir maintained a strong stance against their policies. She won a major concession by convincing the authorities to allow "family unit" immigration into the state instead of the "first-in, first out" policy that was causing the deaths of hundreds of children forced to live in the squalid conditions found in the refugee camps on Cyprus.<sup>7</sup> Golda maintained the Jewish vision during these difficult situations, because, as she said: "Let us take in the old and the infirm along with the healthy, the weak and the illiterate along with the strong and the educated. Israel without immigrants isn't worth having."<sup>8</sup>

When on 29 November 1947 the United Nations General Assembly passed a partition resolution calling for the establishment of an Independent Jewish State, an Independent Arab State and the internationalism of the city of Jerusalem, it seemed the worst was over. Finally, there could be peace and harmony throughout the region. Unfortunately, such was not to be.

Violence broke out almost at once between the Arab and Jewish communities following the May 14 1948 proclamation of the State of Israel. The period of conflict, commonly referred to as the War of Independence, lasted through 1948 and into 1949. At the time armistice agreements were signed between Israel and her neighbors, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria, Israel's territory had grown by almost 50%, including the western part of the city of Jerusalem. However, since a true peace accord was not reached through these armistices, numerous outbreaks of violence occurred at the borders

between these countries for years, the most notable of which will be highlighted in this background discussion.

The years of 1966 and 1967 saw a marked increase in terrorist incidents and hostile acts across each of the armistice lines of demarcation. Following Egyptian President Nassar's May 1967 closure of the Strait of Tiran to Israeli ships and the signing of a mutual defense treaty between Egypt and Jordan, Israeli forces launched attacks against Egypt, Jordan and Syria. The June 1967 "Six Day War" ended when all parties accepted the cease-fire called for by UN Security Council Resolution 235 and 236. Israel now controlled the Sinai Peninsula, the Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights, and the formerly Jordanian-controlled West Bank of the Jordan River, including East Jerusalem.

In November 1967, the Security Council adopted Resolution 242, the so-called "Land for Peace" formula, which called for the establishment of a lasting peace based upon Israeli withdrawal from territories occupied in the Six Day War. The trade off was to be the end of all states of belligerency, respect for the sovereignty of all states in the area, and the right to live in peace within secure, recognized boundaries.<sup>9</sup>

What followed was a six year war of attrition between Egypt and Israel, a period where repeated U.S. efforts to negotiate peaceful behavior between the two countries were largely unsuccessful. On 6 October 1973, violence again erupted between Syria, Egypt and Israel.

Surprised by the attack on the Jewish Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), Israeli forces were pushed back by the Syrians from the North and the Egyptians from the South. However, Israel recovered on both fronts, pushing the Syrians back beyond the 1967

cease-fire lines. In the South, Israeli forces crossed the Suez Canal, taking a salient on its west bank. It took the combined efforts of the United States and the Soviet Union to broker a cease-fire between the combatants.

As before, this cease-fire did not end the clashes along the cease-fire lines. After much effort from the U.S. towards a peaceful solution, the Israeli forces withdrew from the Suez in March 1974, allowing Egypt to reassume control. In May 1974, a disengagement agreement was signed between Syria and Israel, and the UN Disengagement and Observer Force (UNDOF) was established as a peacekeeping force in the Golan.<sup>10</sup>

It would not be until 1978 that significant steps were made towards a lasting peace between Israel and Egypt. At the September 1978 invitation of President Jimmy Carter, Egyptian President Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Begin met at Camp David to formulate a framework for peace between their countries. Under the terms of the March 1979 treaty, Israel returned the Sinai to Egypt in April 1982.

During the years following Israel's War of Independence, the border between Israel and Lebanon was relatively quiet, especially when contrasted with border regions separating Israel and her other neighbors. However, when the Palestinian fighters (the seeds that would later become the Palestinian Liberation Organization, or PLO) were expelled from Jordan in 1970, they moved into southern Lebanon and began a protracted campaign of terror and hostilities along Israel's northern border. As a result of these actions, in March 1978, Israel launched an offensive into Lebanon against the Palestinian guerrilla forces. With the passage of Security Council Resolution 425, which established

the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) peace-keeping force, Israel withdrew her forces.

Despite the efforts of UNIFIL peace-keepers, however, the cross border forays by PLO guerrilla forces continued. In June 1982, Israel again invaded Lebanon to attack the PLO stronghold, resulting in an August 1982 withdrawal of PLO forces from Lebanon. Assisted by the United States, Israel and Lebanon reached an agreement in 1983 to set the stage whereby Israel would withdraw its forces from Lebanon. Pressured by Syria, however, Lebanon never ratified, and subsequently canceled its side of the agreement. Finally, in June 1985, Israel withdrew most of its troops from Lebanon, leaving a small residual Israeli force and an Israeli-supported militia in southern Lebanon. Israel considers this "security zone" a necessary buffer against further attacks on its northern territory.<sup>11</sup>

As the decade of the 1980's came to an end, it was common knowledge that several countries throughout the Middle East had gained considerable advancements in the capability of their conventional weapons systems; advancements that included missile technology and the ability to strike targets far beyond their own borders and into their neighbors territory. The advanced development of such weapons systems did nothing to help, but rather hindered, any sort of peaceful resolution to the volatile conditions throughout the region. Further, it was the development of such capability that helped set the stage for the 1990 invasion of Kuwait by Iraqi forces, and the concomitant threat this action posed against Israel and other Middle Eastern nations.

It would seem overly simplistic to state that the only thing that kept Israel and her forces out of the Desert Shield/Desert Storm conflict was the almost miraculous

diplomatic efforts launched between the United States and Israel. Despite a series of Scud missile attacks launched against Israeli territory, and largely due to the well-publicized (some would say "over-rated"), shoot-down or deflect capability of U.S.-manned Patriot missile batteries, Israel nevertheless refrained from directly entering the conflict. The issue of Israel's non-involvement is especially significant, and cannot be overstated: the coalition, which included several Arab nations aligned against Iraq was so delicate and fragile that any direct involvement from Israel would have probably caused it to break-up. The period following the Desert Shield/Desert Storm conflict would represent a lucrative opportunity for new peace initiatives throughout the Middle Eastern region; an opportunity fueled largely by the coalition's victory against Iraq.

### **Recent Developments Towards Peace**

The Middle East Peace Conference, convened in October 1991 in Madrid, Spain, marked the beginning of an era where Israel, her Arab neighbors and even the Palestinians gathered to commence serious, meaningful dialogue towards peace. This critical step in direct bilateral negotiations included Israel, a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation, Lebanon and Syria. The Conference was jointly sponsored by the United States and Russia. The three broad requirements outlined at the start of the conference were: a yearning for peace; an emphasis on land; the need for security.<sup>12</sup> These were to become core issues for the involved parties; inseparable elements in the search for a lasting peace.

There could be little doubt in the session-opening message given to the participants by then U.S. President Bush that the tenets of the November 1967 UN Security Council Resolution 242 ("Land for Peace"), were still viable and essential to the negotiations:

Throughout the Middle East, we seek a stable and enduring settlement.  
We've not defined what this means; indeed, I make these points with no map

showing where the final borders are to be drawn. Nevertheless, we believe territorial compromise is essential for peace. Boundaries should reflect the quality of both security and political arrangements. The United States is prepared to accept whatever the parties themselves find acceptable. What we seek...is a solution that meets the twin tests of fairness and security.<sup>13</sup>

At the end of the week of negotiations, although several participants were still hung up on the issue of venue, the ice was broken and a foundation laid for ongoing bilateral and multilateral negotiations aimed at peace and economic development in the region.

### **Declaration of Principles Between Israel and PLO**

Built upon the framework of the Madrid Conference, a Declaration of Principles (DOP), between Israel and the PLO was signed on the South Lawn of the White House on 13 September 1993. This monumental step between two bitter enemies allowed for the transfer of authority (self-rule) from Israel to an interim Palestinian authority for the Gaza Strip and Jericho. Sadly, as with almost every other move towards peace, even the progress anticipated and so dearly hoped for under the DOP would be marred by violence and terrorist's actions. Leaders on both sides of the negotiations, however, stood together in staunch disapproval and condemnation of those attempting to thwart peace at any cost.

In September 1995, Israel and the Palestinians signed a comprehensive Interim Agreement which further extended Palestinian self-rule to portions of the West Bank, and called for the redeployment of Israel's Defense Forces from several key cities in the disputed region. The strength and integrity of the Interim Agreement was also the impetus behind the April 1996 majority vote of the Palestine National Council to revoke those sections of the Palestinian Covenant that called for the destruction of the State of Israel.<sup>14</sup>



Several milestones laid out in the DOP, however, have not followed the original timelines, partially due to the terrorist attacks mentioned earlier, but also due in part to the Likud party's intent to withhold occupied territory as a bargaining chip in future peace process negotiations. There is increasing hope, however, that the current Israeli government will recognize that important changes have taken place throughout the Middle East since they were last in power—changes that reflect major strides in political and economical development.<sup>15</sup>

### **Israel-Jordan Peace Treaty**

It was truly monumental that the governmental heads of Israel and Jordan met at the Arava/Araba border crossing point between the two countries to sign an historic peace treaty on 26 October 1994. This event was preceded by the July 1994 Washington Declaration whereby the leaders of both countries committed to honor "...the achievement of a just, lasting, and comprehensive peace in the Middle East based upon Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 in all their aspects."<sup>16</sup> As with the precedent-setting Israel-Egypt peace treaty, the fundamental underpinnings of this treaty was again the "Land-for-Peace" constructs of Resolution 242 and the reaffirmation of same contained in Resolution 338.

As part of the process, the United States House and Senate agreed to write off \$220 million of Jordan's debt to the USA, and send Jordan some excess US military equipment under a Security Assistance agreement.<sup>17</sup>

Unique with the Israeli-Jordanian peace treaty were measures agreed upon whose effects will certainly go beyond merely ending years of conflict; measures whose roots can

be traced all the way back to the “then secret” negotiations between Golda Meir and King Abdullah of Jordan and the more recently disclosed secret negotiations between Israeli leaders and King Hussein. Probably key among the agreements contained in the treaty was a pledge from both sides to not allow their territories to be used as a staging base for an attack by a third party, an issue of particular importance to Israel because of the threat posed by other countries launching an attack via the lengthy Jordanian-Israeli border. Also, Article 4 of the treaty addressed the plethora of security issues so essential to a lasting peace; issues dealing with bringing an end to belligerency, hostility and military threats and fighting terrorism.

Using an “out of the box” approach to the “Land-for-Peace” method of addressing the land in dispute along the Jordanian-Israeli border, the leaders of both countries agreed that the land would be returned to Jordan, with Israel recognizing Jordanian sovereignty, but Israel will lease back almost one third of the land in order to protect the fields of Israeli farmers. This arrangement was both a result of the trusting relationship of the leaders and negotiators and a confidence-building force in its own right.<sup>18</sup> As with Israel’s other successful and lasting peace treaties, time will judge the outcome of this long-awaited stride towards peace between Israel and Jordan.

### **Israel-Syria and Lebanon**

Probably the most elusive, but absolutely essential ingredient in the overall Middle Eastern peace movement is the ongoing conflict along Israel’s borders with Syria and Lebanon. Israel still occupies the recaptured, militarily-dominant terrain of the Golan Heights through which Syria launched the Northern Front of the 1973 Yom Kippur War

against Israel. Israel also still maintains a small security force in Southern Lebanon as a "buffer" against continued Hezbollah-fired Katyusha rocket attacks along Israel's northern border region. In April 1996, however, some progress seemed possible when the leaders of Israel, Lebanon and Syria signed an agreement to end the current crisis and end the senseless attacks. Since this agreement is in writing, there is hope that the results will prove to be long lasting.<sup>19</sup>

To further complicate negotiations in this specific region, there is the added concern by both Syria and Lebanon that any bilateral progress made by an Israeli-Lebanese agreement or an Israeli-Syrian agreement without the concomitant inclusion of the "odd-man-out" country would certainly spark an outbreak of hostilities or at least cause a serious set-back to any further negotiations with that country. The delicate and narrow balance beam upon which these negotiations must take place is certainly made more harrowing by Israel's insistent construction of new settlements throughout portions of the disputed regions.

During a 27 October 1994 visit by President Clinton to Syrian President Assad, it was unambiguously clear that peaceful relations with Israel were tied to Israel's full withdrawal from the Golan Heights and southern Lebanon.<sup>20</sup> Dialogue between Syrian and Israeli negotiators contained open expressions of concern, even in 1994, over the urgency of negotiations and movement towards a peaceful resolution with Israel while the Labor party was still in power; concerns fueled by the likelihood that a Likud victory in the 1996 elections would end any previously agreed-upon withdrawal of Israeli forces from the disputed areas.<sup>21</sup>

### **Multilateral Negotiations Through Working Groups**

Returning to the Madrid Conference of 1991, there was a separate, but equally essential agreement reached that in its own way will help shape the future of the Middle East almost as certainly as a comprehensive peace treaty. Five multilateral working groups, consisting of negotiators and businesspersons from the participating nations, were formed to cover Arms Control and Regional Security; Water Resources; Environmental Issues; Economic Development; and Refugees. Intentionally, these working groups were formed with strong social and economic ties rather than focusing on border disputes and the like. Progress is being made as negotiators find common ground upon which to formulate goals, activities and projects that are tied not only to the bilateral peace negotiations, but more importantly, to economic stability and growth throughout the region.<sup>22</sup>

### **Diversity and Demographics**

Israel is a nation filled with diversity, both ethnic and religious. At the turn of the century, with the birth of the Zionist movement, Jewish pioneers were an absolute minority, at odds with both the tribal, nomadic Arabs who called this region their home as well the British who administered the Palestine Mandate. Further, these hardy souls were at odds with a harsh environment which resisted every ounce of sweat they invested to irrigate, drain, plow, plant and harvest the new Jewish homeland. It was the determination and single-minded focus of these few which grew slowly at first, then by multiples into the State of Israel we know today where the Jewish population represents over 4.5 million of the roughly 5.5 million total. The majority of the remaining million are Arabs.

The ethnic diversity is even further compounded by the often volatile mixture of four fundamental religions: Judaism, Islam, Christianity and Druze. Each of these religions call the city of Jerusalem the sacred "birthplace" of their faith, a claim that to this day stirs hostilities on an almost daily basis. For the most part, these groups are kept apart by partitioning along ethnic and religious lines within Jerusalem's boundaries. It doesn't take a wild imagination to discern just how fragile this arrangement is and how quickly a simple event can upset the balance.

The seemingly simple act of Jewish authorities granting permission to open the other end of a previously "one-way in, one-way out" Archaeological tunnel along one Jerusalem's city walls in the fall of 1996 was such an event. Intended to ease the flow of visitors to and through the site, a round of violence erupted that left several people dead and scores injured. Tensions fueled by this perceived insensitive encroachment of Jewish faithful on and against the holy sites of people of Islamic faith remained a front page topic for weeks; tensions that were even further heightened by the then-new Likud government's insistence that the tunnel would remain open.

Tensions throughout the region are not only between members of the Jewish and Islamic faith. Christians, some of whom can trace their family roots back to the Crusades, live in less than ideal circumstances throughout the majority of Arab-dominated Western Bank communities. Citing that even their freedom to move at will from one community to the other is severely hampered, several Christian families are emigrating from the region in search of better conditions. As with the perceived insensitive behavior of Jewish rulers

over members of the Islamic faith, Christians feel that Yasser Arafat's Palestine Authority remains indifferent to their needs and desires.<sup>23</sup>

Within the Jewish faith itself, tensions run high between secular, Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox Jews. By all indications, given an average birthrate of six children per family, the ultra-Orthodox population already represents over 30 percent of Jerusalem's 420,000 Jews and over 50 percent of the schoolchildren. Whereas secular Jews have for the most part adapted to religious and ethnic diversity throughout the region, the staunch insistence of Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox Jews upon certain religion-based conditions that impact all within the confines of the city can do nothing but incite ill-will. An example that most easily illustrates this tension is the ultra-Orthodox insistence that all roads throughout Jerusalem be closed on Saturdays (the Jewish Sabbath), in complete disregard for the needs and desires for those who are not of the same faith or even adherent to the same levels of strictness within the Jewish faith.<sup>24</sup>

### **Economic Growth in the Region**

Progress along the peace continuum must certainly include consideration of ways to bolster and develop the economic performance and growth potential throughout the Middle East. Great strides in that direction have been made through the birth of the Middle East Development Bank (MEDB). "Egypt, Israel, Jordan and the Palestinians came to Washington to advance the idea of an MEDB, their first joint proposal of any kind."<sup>25</sup> The MEDB has three very specific objectives: "to assist the private sector, to promote regional projects, and to advance regional economic policy dialogue."<sup>26</sup> Banking alone will not cure the economic ills of this or any region. Economic growth and

prosperity will only come as the inherent danger of conflict fades further into the past; whereby other nations will have some degree of security that money and effort they invest into the region will grow and not simply be consumed by some future conflict.

A successful economics formula for the Middle East should be based not only upon internal growth of Israel and her immediate neighbors, but also upon meaningful, long-term investment into the growth of lesser fortunate nations throughout the region. In line with such developments, diplomatic offices have been exchanged with Morocco, Tunisia and Mauritania, and [economic] trade offices with Qatar and Oman. With the exception of Iraq, Libya, and Sudan, every Arab League member has participated in some aspect of the peace process.<sup>27</sup> As Secretary Christopher stated in his June 1996 remarks to the Council on Foreign Relations Conference on Investing in the Future: The Middle East and North Africa in the Next Century:

It is critical that we maintain our commitment to building the economic foundations necessary for a lasting peace. Growing opportunity can ease the conflicts and hatreds that have held back the Middle East for half a century. Rising prosperity can help the Middle East move forward into a new millennium of reconciliation, cooperation, and full integration with the global economy.....As a former Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, said over half a century ago, "When goods move, soldiers don't." That is precisely the principle behind the Middle East Economic Summit process.<sup>28</sup>

Peace and its lasting terms can rightfully be brokered by politicians and diplomats, but economic progress towards peace comes at the involvement of businesspersons, workers and inter-nation commerce.

### **Water Resources**

Water, both the availability of it, and the scarcity-driven need for it, has been a source of conflict throughout the world for as long as recorded history has been kept.

Throughout the Middle East, however, water-related issues have been the source of security concerns in virtually every peace negotiation. There are primarily two sources of water affecting the negotiations between Israel and her immediate neighbors: waters flowing through rivers comprising the Jordan Valley area, and water captured from the Mediterranean Sea through desalination processes. Alas, there was little progress in any of the water disputes and negotiations until all sides agreed that the “price” of water as a resource could not exceed the cost to produce it through desalination, regardless of who claimed ownership to it. Indeed, the Israeli-Jordanian peace treaty explicitly lays out not only current water supply agreements, but further outlines ways in which both countries agree to search for, protect and transport supplies of water necessary to meet future needs.<sup>29</sup>

### **Strategic Depth**

What validity remains to the years-old argument that Israel needs to retain terrain captured during the 1967 and subsequent wars in order to have some sort of “strategic depth” to thwart would-be invaders? Given the realities mentioned earlier about the weapons range and missile technology improvements within Arab nations far outside Israel’s borders, the concept of strategic depth seems to be almost moot. Threats of any credible size to Israel’s security are more likely to come from Iraq, Iran or Libya rather than from Syria or Lebanon. Further, Israel has brokered peace along two of its three border regions, primarily by returning captured lands. Hope remains that progress will soon emerge in negotiations between Israel, Syria and Lebanon. As the occupied lands of the Golan Heights and Israeli presence in southern Lebanon remain at center stage in any



negotiated settlement, it will be essential for Israel's Likud government to face reality in order to bring a solution to their third and final border region.

### **U.S. Policy Towards Israel**

The most important aspect of U.S. policy towards Israel and the Middle East community is that of consistency. The United States stood behind the new state in 1948 and has not turned away since. The U.S. strategy towards Israel and the Middle East has been to bring stability into the region, a stability which now provides the framework upon which peace is being developed. U.S. interests are tightly interwoven with those of Israel for historic, political and moral reasons.<sup>30</sup> In the words of Robert H. Pelletreau, Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs, in his 12 June 1996 testimony before the House International Relations Committee, "there are few areas of the world where so many ... U.S. interests come together as in the Middle East."<sup>31</sup>

As previously stated, there are several military threats prevalent in the Middle East. For the purposes of this assessment, focus will only be placed upon the military balance between Israel and her immediate neighbors, Egypt and Jordan. Israel is by far the strongest military power of the three, primarily because of her "special relationship" with the United States. When looking at the Foreign Military Financing (FMF) Program, in 1995 alone, "more than 98 percent of FMF was for Israel and Egypt...(\$3.1billion)."<sup>32</sup> This influx of military equipment and hardware is designed to keep Israel strong, in the interest of her security. Certainly Egypt is receiving its share of this equipment, but in weapons technology and modernized equipment, "Israel's qualitative military edge is greater than ever because [the U.S.] has kept her word."<sup>33</sup> U.S. involvement in the Israeli-

Jordanian peace treaty likewise included agreements to provide equipment and military hardware to Jordan, albeit not as technologically advanced as that provided to Israel.

The United States “commitment to Israel is unshakable. It will stay that way because Israel must have the means to defend itself, by itself.

### **Conclusion**

Is there any validity to the “Land for Peace” question posed in the title of this assessment? The fundamental backbone of both the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty and the more recently concluded Israeli-Jordanian peace treaty is unmistakably the constructs laid out in UN Security Council Resolution 242. In both cases, the net result was the return of land captured by the Israeli’s during the 1967 war. If land has been returned for peace, what is the remaining obstruction that stands in the way of peace?

The shift in political attitude that accompanied the victory of the Likud party over Shimon Peres’ Labor party is responsible for the abrupt slow down in the peace process. Mr. Netanyahu attained victory through a party platform that appealed to the ultra-Orthodox and Orthodox segments of the Jewish community. His platform centered around a theme of “no more West Bank land will be given away, and he will not allow the Palestinian’s a state.”<sup>34</sup> An irony of his platform as a candidate and his current position as Prime Minister is revealed by the fact that Mr. Netanyahu engaged in negotiations with Mr. Arafat that resulted in an agreement to pull Israeli Defense Forces out of the West Bank city of Hebron

Does this agreement mean that Mr. Netanyahu has now changed directions to make peace negotiations more accommodating? Unfortunately, the answer seems to be

“no,” due primarily to Mr. Netanyahu’s open support of further settlements and settler subsidies in the Golan Heights, the very region so crucial to any sort of final peace agreement between Israel and Syria. In an extremely rare display of public criticism of Prime Minister Netanyahu’s policies, President Clinton said that “...Netanyahu’s support for expanding settlements and his reinstatement of subsidies for settlers ... was “absolutely” an obstacle to peace.”<sup>35</sup> Mr. Netanyahu’s encouragement of further Jewish settlement within this region is tantamount to pouring gasoline on an open fire..

Probably the most sensitive of the issues that will have to be addressed in a comprehensive peace settlement throughout the region is the status of the city of Jerusalem. Israel declares Jerusalem to be its capitol city, a claim not recognized by the U.S. or any of the other permanent members of the UN Security Council, as outlined in UN Security Council Resolutions 252, 267 and 298. Each of these Resolutions call for the return of Jerusalem to the status of an international city, with a concomitant return of land and properties captured during the 1967 fighting.

Considering the overpopulation tactics of the ultra-Orthodox Jews, and considering that the “ultra’s” threw their support behind the election of Jerusalem’s mayor (a member of the Likud party), there is only a dim hope that tensions within this religiously diverse city will lessen or reach any sort of equality or normalcy. One thing seems certain: refusal of Israel’s leaders to honor Jerusalem as an international city, but rather insist upon a singularly Jewish claim to it will pose a burgeoning obstacle to any negotiations.

It is not critical that the agreements being negotiated and developed within the region do not exactly follow U.S. recommendations. What is critical, however, is that all of the parties develop a peace that is founded upon certain core values, such as respect for human rights, upholding other nations sovereignty, abolishment of weapons of mass destruction and elimination of terrorism. A peace based upon values such as these will stand far more strongly than will a forced peace based upon fear of threat or destruction. A values based peace will also encourage economic growth between neighbors who all stand to prosper by a general loosening of cross-border movement.

The bottom line of this assessment centers around a positive, up-beat optimism that the very success of the peace processes already consummated will bring ever increasing pressure upon Israeli leaders to get "out-of-their-box" in bringing peace to the remaining regions. Without trust, no bond, whether economic, cultural or otherwise, can develop. Without a bond between neighbors, distrust, hate and deception will never fade.

## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>1</sup> Marie Syrkin, Golda Meir: Woman With A Cause (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1963) 72
- <sup>2</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>3</sup> Ibid., 107
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid., 123
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid., 151
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid., 153
- <sup>7</sup> Ibid., 166
- <sup>8</sup> Menahem Meir, My Mother Golda Meir: A Son's Evocation of Life With Golda Meir (New York: Arbor House, c1983), 138
- <sup>9</sup> Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs, Office of Public Communication, Background Notes Series: Israel, (Washington, D.C.: 1995): 4.
- <sup>10</sup> Ibid., 5
- <sup>11</sup> Ibid., 6
- <sup>12</sup> Department of State, Dispatch, US Secretary James Baker, Remarks made at the Middle East Peace Conference, (Royal Palace, Madrid, Spain: November 1, 1991): Vol. 2, No. 44
- <sup>13</sup> Department of State, Dispatch, US President George Bush, Address before the Opening Session of Middle East Peace Conference, (Royal Palace, Madrid, Spain: October 30, 1991): Vol. 2, No. 44
- <sup>14</sup> Department of State, Dispatch, White House Statements: Amendment off Palestinian Covenant, (Washington, D.C.: April 24, 1996): Vol. 7, No. 17, 203.
- <sup>15</sup> Gulf Security and the Middle East Peace Process, Keynote Address by Assistant Secretary of State Robert H. Pelletreau before the Fifth Annual U.S. Mideast Policymakers Conference at the George C. Marshall Foundation, (Lexington, VA: September 15, 1996): Subsection: Breakthrough in 1993.
- <sup>16</sup> Geoffrey Kemp and Jeremy Pressman, "The Middle East: Continuation of the Peace Process," in Stockholm International Peace Research Institute Yearbook 1995 (New York, NY.: Oxford University Press Inc., 1995), App 5A, 197
- <sup>17</sup> Ibid., 183
- <sup>18</sup> Ibid., 184, 185
- <sup>19</sup> Department of State, Dispatch, White House Statements: Agreement Reached to End Rocket Attacks on Israel, (Washington, D.C.: April 26, 1996): Vol. 7, No. 18, 206.
- <sup>20</sup> Geoffrey Kemp and Jeremy Pressman, "The Middle East, 189.
- <sup>21</sup> Ibid., 188.
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid., 191.
- <sup>23</sup> Carlisle (PA) Patriot-News: Bethlehem Christians Struggling: December 25, 1996.
- <sup>24</sup> Alan Mairson, "The Three Faces of Jerusalem," National Geographic, April 1996, 20.
- <sup>25</sup> Department of State, Dispatch, Under Secretary for Economic, Business, and Agricultural Affairs, Joan E. Spero, Statement Before the Subcommittee on Domestic and International Monetary Policy of the House Committee on Banking and Financial Services, (Washington, D.C.: 25 April 1996): Vol. 7, No. 18, 217.
- <sup>26</sup> Ibid., 218.
- <sup>27</sup> Department of State, Dispatch, US Secretary Christopher, Remarks to the Council on Foreign Relations Conference on Investing in the Future: The Middle East and North Africa in the Next Century, (New York City, NY: June 14, 1996): Vol. 7, No. 25, 313.
- <sup>28</sup> Ibid., 314.
- <sup>29</sup> Geoffrey Kemp and Jeremy Pressman, "The Middle East, 185.

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<sup>30</sup> National Defense University, Institute for National Studies, Strategic Assessment 1996: Instruments of U.S. Power (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1996): 117.

<sup>31</sup> Department of State, Dispatch, Robert H. Pelletreau, Statement before the House International Relations Committee, (Washington, D.C.: June 12, 1996): Vol. 7, No. 26, 336.

<sup>32</sup> National Defense University, Strategic Assessment 1996, 100.

<sup>33</sup> Department of State, Dispatch, President Clinton, Remarks to the American-Israel Public affairs Committee Policy Conference, (Washington, D.C.: April 28, 1996): Vol. 7, No. 18, 207.

<sup>34</sup> Carlisle (PA) Patriot-News: Netanyahu Promise Revealed: December 26, 1996

<sup>35</sup> Carlisle (PA) Patriot-News: Clinton Criticizes Netanyahu for Creating Obstacle to Peace: December 17, 1996.

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